

History in the Making
Understanding the Book of Acts
Lesson Nine

Introduction: To this point in Acts, the church was enjoying uninterrupted progress in Jerusalem. (Pentecost, miracles, unity, and a daily adding to the church's initial 3000 converts.

This text brings the upstart 1st century church down to earth

- ✓ The progress of the church did not occur without opposition
- ✓ But advance it did amidst the opposition
- ✓ This is our challenge-accept the truth of the Gospel message and be faithful in following the courageous example of the early church

Despite the opposition the church flourished!

I. They maintained an unwavering doctrinal purity.

A. The arrest of Peter and John

1. The healing of the lame man at temple gate and Peter's subsequent sermon-drew a large crowd-some concern for riot
2. Beyond that concern-Sadducees disdain for doctrine of resurrection. This was clearly insisted on by Peter and John
3. Because it was already evening-too late for an inquiry before sundown-they locked them up
4. By this time-5,000 believers (men, women, and children)

NOTE: The opposition was not going to be the final word

B. The trial of Peter and John

1. The meeting of the Sanhedrin (71 member judicial body-temple officials, many from high priestly families, elders, and teachers of the Law)

NOTE: Luke's mention of Ananias, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander of priestly families emphasizes the Sadducee slant. Note as well, a few weeks before-Ananias/Caiaphas participated in the death of Jesus. If they hoped they got rid of Him-it was short-lived.

2. Set them in the midst (semi-circle) and challenged them.

And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Acts 4:7 NKJV

3. Peter's response

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:8-12 NKJV

- a. The healed cripple was with them—"this man stands here before you whole (v. 10).
- b. Directly to Caiaphas—"by the name of Jesus Christ whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, this man stands before you whole."

C. Their doctrinal clarity

1. Recapitulation of doctrine of resurrection
2. Clear message of the exclusivity of Christ

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12 NKJV

- a. Today religious pluralism denies this claim
- b. Believers are cast as bigots, unloving, uncaring
- c. There is no salvation for anyone outside of the name of Jesus

D. So easy to waver when opposed (youth at college, church at workplace) NO OTHER NAME!

II. They maintained an uncanny resemblance to Christ.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. Acts 4:13-14 NKJV

A. The argument of Peter with teachers of the law was stunning

1. Uneducated and untrained
2. Illiterate-lay person
3. Not skilled in the finer points of the law
4. Yet he spoke with authority

NOTE: It is what was said of Jesus

And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?" John 7:15 NKJV

5. He spoke with authority-then backed it up teaching with miracles (used Old Testament scripture to make his point)
- B. They realized they had been with Jesus
 1. Spoke like Him
 2. Confident like Him
 3. Miracles like Him
- C. They had no reply "they could say nothing against it."
- D. Do we have that same resemblance to Jesus?
 1. Their resemblance to Jesus became evident (realized took note)
 2. Their ministry was clearly beyond themselves (Spirit) spoke with authority
 3. The evidence of their ministry accompanied them (healed man stood there-v. 15)

III. They maintained an uncompromising devotion to their call.

- A. The council decided to let them go after a warning

But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. Acts 4:15-18 NKJV

1. Big problem for council
2. No crime committed-just healing
3. But couldn't afford a Jesus outbreak
4. Told them to stop ministering in the name of Jesus

NOTE: Never did they try to disprove the resurrection at all and no body to disprove and the apostles were making headway

B. Response of the apostles

So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed. Acts 4:18-22 NKJV

1. Ban on name of Jesus
2. They could not obey man and disobey God (Peter put question to them)

NOTE: Their devotion was rooted in experience

(We have seen and heard-we must witness)

C. Great challenge today-world trying to silence the church

1. We must spread the word, even at the risk of peril
2. Our willingness to continue is evidence of its truth

NOTE: What a challenge this would be to Theophilus as he read

IV. They maintained an unceasing dependency on the power of the Spirit

And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.' 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." Acts 4:23-30 NKJV

- A. Report to the church
- B. Driven them to prayer
- C. Note they faced the same opposition of Christ
- D. Assumed the miraculous would accompany the word
- E. Prayed NOT for deliverance but new boldness

Conclusion: God responded

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:31 NKJV

Chrysostom observed of the place being shaken-“and that made them more unshaken.”

Opportunities will come

- ✓ Unwavering doctrinal purity
- ✓ Uncanny resemblance to Christ
- ✓ Uncompromising devotion to our call
- ✓ Unceasing dependence on the power of the Spirit

Shake us that we may be unshakeable!